



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release August 1, 1983

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WESTERN HEMISPHERE NATIONS GATHER TO STRENGTHEN ENFORCEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION OF WORLDWIDE ENDANGERED SPECIES TREATY

Wildlife conservation leaders from 23 Western Hemisphere nations begin a two-week seminar August 1 at the Department of State for an in depth study of ways to improve the implementation and enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The delegates will participate in presentations by the CITES Secretariat, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and several other government and private agencies on mutual problems and experiences in administering the 81-nation treaty that marks its tenth anniversary this year.

CITES was negotiated and signed in Washington in 1973. Its purposes are to promote international cooperation in conservation and to protect endangered wildlife and plants against over-exploitation from international trade. It lists wild animals and plants under one of three categories, depending on the degree of threat, and regulates trade through a system of permits. The Interior Department, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, administers CITES for this country.

"This seminar is an example of the cooperative spirit among the community of nations that has made CITES a significant force for curbing the threat of species' extinction caused by trade," said G. Ray Arnett, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "CITES is a dynamic, working treaty and is expanding rapidly. It is important that implementation and enforcement keep pace with that growth."

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A major obstacle to proper implementation of CITES in the Western Hemisphere, as in most of the world, is the lack of personnel in government agencies who understand the treaty. To improve this situation, the CITES Secretariat is sponsoring a series of seminars on implementation. The Fish and Wildlife Service has assisted CITES Secretary-General Eugene Lapointe in planning and coordinating the sessions, which will serve as a model for future seminars. Goals are to establish direct working relationships between the CITES Management Authorities of the Western Hemisphere nations, strengthen the network of CITES administrators throughout the region, encourage organization of adequate government structures for CITES implementation, and increase regional cooperation in dealing with CITES-related problems.

Simultaneous English-Spanish translations will be provided during the first week of presentations by all the participating countries, conservation organizations, and the following U.S. government agencies: The Departments of Interior, State, Agriculture, Justice, and Commerce. The second week of the seminar will be held at the Department of the Interior, with onsite inspections of import and export activities at the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York and the Newark, New Jersey Seaport.

The World Wildlife Fund-U.S. and the United Nations Environmental Programme are helping fund the seminar. Western Hemisphere nations participating are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Santa Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

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